United Nations ST/IC/1999/62

# Secretariat

9 August 1999

## Information circular*

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **Language and Communications Programme at Headquarters — year 2000 programme**

1. Language courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are organized in order to promote linguistic balance and multilingualism within the Secretariat and to improve the language capabilities of its staff, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 43/224 D of 21 December 1988 and 50/11 of 2 November 1995. The purpose of these courses is to provide staff members with the opportunity to learn the official languages of the Organization and to use them in their work. To further enhance the ability of staff members to perform their jobs with greater competence and to develop their linguistic skills for professional development, special advanced courses in active listening and pronunciation, as well as courses in communication skills such as drafting and giving presentations, are offered.

2. The purpose of the present circular is to advise staff members of the registration dates and schedules for the United Nations Language and Communications Programme at Headquarters.

## I. 2000 course calendar

3. The 2000 course calendar is as follows:

(a) *January 2000 term*

Language classes: 3 January–24 March
End-of-term examinations: 27 March–31 March

(b) *April 2000 term*

Language classes: 17 April–7 July
End-of-term examinations: 10–14 July

(c) *September 2000 term*

Language classes: 11 September–1 December
End-of-term examinations: 4–8 December

## II. Registration

4. The registration schedule for language and communications courses is as follows:

(a) *Registration for January 2000 term*

1–12 November 1999

(b) *Registration for April 2000 term*

28 February–10 March 2000

(c) *Registration for September 2000 term*

5–16 June 2000
28 August–1 September 2000

(d) *Registration for the January 2001 term*

30 October–10 November 2000

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 2000.

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### Registration procedure

5. New participants may register for a language course by filling out a registration form, which may be obtained from the Language and Communications Programme, room S-606, during the established registration period between 1 and 3 p.m., and returning it to the same room before the published deadline. Those who have some prior knowledge of the language they wish to study must make an appointment for a placement test when they register.

6. Once registered, participants will be given an opportunity in class, before the end-of-term examination, to renew their registration for regular courses in subsequent terms. Participants are advised that, if they fail to register at that time, they will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted a written explanation of their special circumstances to the appropriate language coordinator.

7. All those who wish to participate in communication skills courses, conversation classes or special courses, such as the advanced reading workshops and the pronunciation workshops, must fill out the appropriate form, which may be obtained in room S-606 during the registration period. In the case of conversation and special courses, if a course is oversubscribed, priority will be given to staff members and applicants who have not taken the course before.

8. Returning participants who have been absent from a course of study for two terms or more will be required to take a placement test in order to re-enrol in the programme.

### Language of study

9. Prospective participants are advised to exercise particular care in choosing the language in which they wish to take either a regular or an accelerated course, for they may register for only one such course each term and may not interrupt a course of study in one language in order to begin studying another without the authorization of the Staff Development and Learning Service. Students in the programme must write to the staff development officer in charge of the Language and Communications Programme to request such a change.

### Notification of enrolment

10. Staff members and other participants whose registration is current or who have registered during the established registration period should check the class lists, which will be posted on the sixth floor of the Secretariat building in the SA-B classroom area and on the second floor of the DC2 building during the week before the beginning of each term.

### Cancellation of registration

11. Participants who believe that they will be unable to complete the course in which they are enrolled and wish to withdraw must do so by completing the change-of-registration form in room S-606 between 1 and 3 p.m. within the first two weeks of the term. If those students wish to re-register for the same course in a subsequent term, they must come in person to room S-606 during the announced registration period to complete the necessary registration forms. Paying participants who cancel their registration after this two-week period will be considered participants for the term and will be charged the full fee for each course in which they have registered (i.e., no tuition fees are refunded after the second week of classes). Furthermore, they will be treated as repeaters when they register for the same course in a subsequent term.

## III. Language courses

12. Four types of language courses are offered each term: regular, accelerated, conversation and specialized courses. In addition, the Staff Development and Learning Service designs and conducts special job-related language courses to meet specific language needs at the request of departments.

### Regular courses

13. Regular courses meet for one-hour periods, three or four times a week, depending on the level. Classes are offered at the following times:

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| Before work: | 8.30 a.m. |
| Lunch hour: | 12 noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. |
| After work: | 5.45 p.m. (6.15 p.m. during the General Assembly session) |

14. Not all levels of a given language are offered at each of these times. Draft schedules, posted in room S-606, should be consulted at the time of registration. Every effort will be made to place registrants according to the time preferences they indicate; however, because the number of places in lunch-hour courses is limited, there is no guarantee that registrants will be given the time they have chosen.

### Accelerated courses

15. Accelerated courses are offered as an intensive alternative to the regular programme. Classes meet five days a week from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. Written authorization is required for staff members wishing to take such courses.

This authorization must be renewed each time the staff member registers for an accelerated course.

### Conversation courses

16. Conversation courses are provided for staff members who have passed the language proficiency examination or who have a sufficiently advanced knowledge of the language. Those enrolled in the upper four levels of a language programme are also eligible to participate. The purpose of these courses is to develop oral expression and to supplement the instruction provided in the other courses. Conversation classes meet two hours a week.

### Special courses

17. Specialized language workshops in a variety of language skill areas are offered; advanced reading, listening and pronunciation skills workshops are available. These workshops allow participants to focus on and improve their abilities in specific skill areas. At the time of registration, participants may check which workshops are available in the language they wish to study.

## IV. Communication skills

18. To address the need of the Organization for staff members to develop their communication skills for work-related purposes, courses have been developed as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources (A/C.5/51/1).

19. The writing training component of communication skills addresses the need to improve the drafting skills of staff members whose functions require them to draft in a working language of the Organization. Writing workshops, which include courses in expository writing, drafting letters and memoranda (English and French) and report writing generally, meet from 3 to 5 p.m., one day a week. In addition, presentation skills courses (English and French) are offered to develop the ability of staff members to speak more effectively before groups.

20. For a description of these courses, staff are requested to consult the Staff Development Programme site of the Office of Human Resources Management (http://intranet/OHRM/ Training/21ao.htm) on the United Nations Intranet under the "Staff Services" heading or the Staff Development Programme booklet, copies of which are available in room S-606.

## V. Additional information

### Self-study and resource centre

21. The Staff Development and Learning Service operates a self-study and resource centre (DC2, room 203), containing a multimedia laboratory for individual study. The self-study centre offers audio and video materials, computer software and CD-ROM, as well as language training manuals, which are geared to the further development of acquired linguistic skills for United Nations-related purposes. Some communication skills self-study materials are also available.

22. The hours during which the self-study and resource centre are open are posted on the bulletin boards on the second floor of the DC2 building and the sixth floor of the Secretariat building at the beginning of each term so that staff can avail themselves of this resource. All students in the first three levels of a language programme are to work on developing their skills in the centre at least one half hour per week in addition to their class work.

### Lunch-hour attendance of language courses

23. Supervisors are requested to permit staff members attending classes during their lunch hour 20 minutes for a quick meal before resuming their work.

### Absenteeism

24. Participants are advised that those who fail to attend class during the first week of the term will automatically be dropped from the class list, and their places may be allotted to persons on the waiting list unless they have informed the language coordinator in writing. Absences from class during the term should be explained in writing to the appropriate language coordinator.

### Course materials

25. Participants will be informed on the first day of class of the materials that will be used during the course. Textbooks assigned for specific language courses are available for purchase in the United Nations bookshop, located in GA-032A. It should be noted that course materials produced by the Staff Development and Learning Service are intended for use exclusively by participants in the language courses offered by that Service.

### End-of-term examinations

26. Examination schedules are posted during the last month of classes. Participants are advised that examinations are an integral part of the language programme and it is

mandatory to take them. Participants who do not sit for the end-of-term examination will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted adequate written explanation to the appropriate coordinator in advance of their absence.

27. Examinations are given after the last week of classes for regular and accelerated courses to determine whether a participant will pass to a higher level or repeat the course. The examinations consist of written and oral components, both of which participants must pass to be able to go on to the next level. Participants who fail a course may arrange to have a general discussion of the results of their examination by making an appointment with the appropriate language coordinator one week after the beginning of a term.

28. Participants who are prevented by compelling circumstances from taking the examination as scheduled and who wish to request a make-up examination must write a memorandum to the coordinator of the language they are studying.

**Language proficiency examination**

29. The United Nations language proficiency examination is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language and may be taken both by participants who have completed the last level of a language course and by staff members who have achieved proficiency from outside sources. The language proficiency examination will be given on 18 and 19 January and 30 and 31 May 2000. The application to take this examination must be made separately. Further details will be provided in the information circular on the year 2000 language proficiency examinations. There are no make-up examinations for the language proficiency examination.

## VI. Enquiries

30. The information desk in the Secretariat building, located in room S-606, is open from 1 to 3 p.m. on weekdays for enquiries.

31. Telephone numbers to call for information:

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| Information desk: | 963-7056 |
| Self-study and resource centre: | 963-2482 |
| Language proficiency examinations: | 963-9503/ 9508 |

Pedagogical enquiries and appointments with language coordinators and head teachers:

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| Arabic: | 963-9506 |
| Chinese: | 963-2481 |
| English: | 963-2188 |
| French: | 963-7019 and 963-1125 |
| Russian: | 963-7063 |
| Spanish: | 963-7026 |

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| Teachers' room (1B-24): | 963-5155 |
| Teachers' room (DC2-201): | 963-2480 |
| Fax machine number for Language and Communications Programme office, room S-606: | 963-6016 |

Staff members who wish to consult a language coordinator or head teacher should telephone in advance to make an appointment.

32. Pending preparation and issuance of an administrative instruction on the rules and procedures governing eligibility and tuition fees for the Language and Communication Skills Programme conforming to the provisions of ST/SGB/1997/1, staff members are requested to consult information circular ST/IC/1996/77 dated 18 December 1996, copies of which can be obtained in room S-606.